RAY BRADBURY

WORLD'S FOREMOST SF AUTHOR

FROST AND FIRE

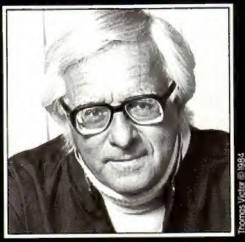
Graphic Adaptation by KLAUS JANSON

SCIENCE FICTION GRAPHIC NOVEL • SF 3 • $5.95/CAN $7.95

Eight days after being born, he was doomed to die an old man...

unless he could find a miraculous escape from the world of

FROST AND FIRE



Thomas Victor © 1984

RAY BRADBURY

"No one can write stories as lyrical and beautiful as Ray Bradbury. He is the best in our solar system— maybe in our galaxy."
—Ben Bova

"When I was a young reader, science fiction gave me spaceships and escape. Ray Bradbury gave me a worthy destination—the human heart."
—Edward Bryant

"It's the ambition of the artist to 'make a new sound.' In other words, to see what everyone else sees but to think what no one else has ever thought. This is a rare quality and Ray Bradbury is one of the very few artists who possesses it."
—Alfred Bester

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A story by
Ray Bradbury

FROST AND FIRE

Adapted by
Klaus Janson

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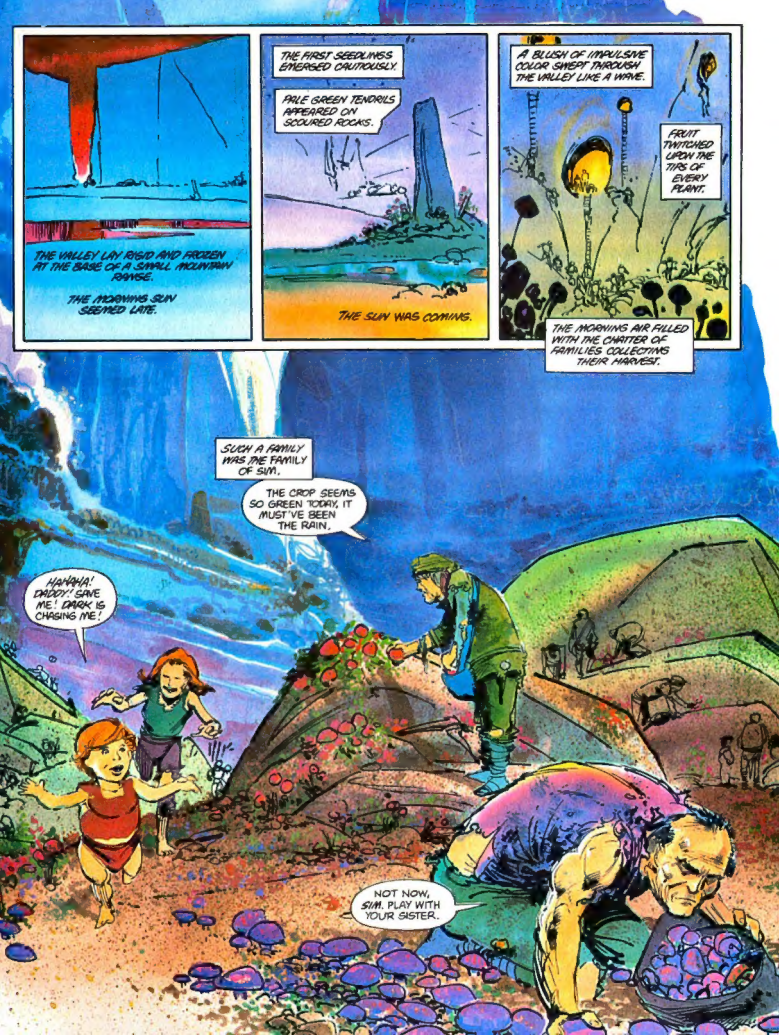
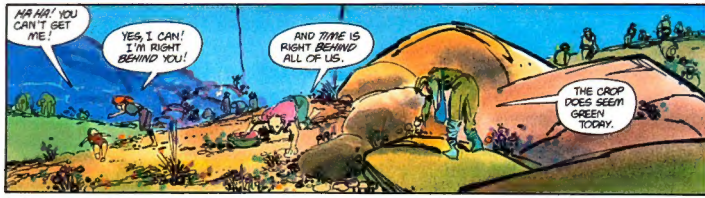
"THERE, THERE, LITTLE ONE. DON'T CRY.
"EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
"DADDY'S HERE.
"DADDY'S HERE.
"AND DADDY'S GOING TO MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER."

NO!
STOP! YOU'LL KILL HIM!
LET ME KILL HIM! WHAT HAS HE TO LIVE FOR?!

NO! LEAVE MY BABY ALONE!
WHY SHOULD THIS ONE BE DIFFERENT? WHAT HAS HE TO LIVE FOR? BETTER TO KILL HIM NOW!
HE IS OUR LAST CHILD. HE MUST LIVE.
THERE MAY BE A FUTURE FOR HIM. HE MAY LIVE LONGER THAN US AND BE YOUNG.
MY WIFE, YOU AND I HAVE ONE MORE DAY! WHAT CAN WE DO IN ONE DAY?
WE CAN KEEP OUR CHILDREN ALIVE. WE MUST!
YOU SEE, SIM? A NEW DAY IS COMING!
OUR LAST DAY, WOMAN. OUR LAST DAY!

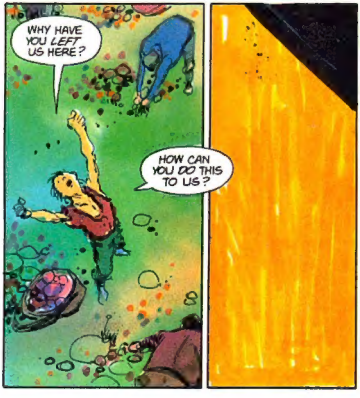

THE VALLEY LAY RIGID AND FROZEN AT THE BASE OF A SMALL MOUNTAIN RANGE.
THE MORNING SUN SEEMED LATE.
THE FIRST SEEDLINGS EMERGED CAUTIOUSLY.
PALE GREEN TENDRILS UNFURLED ON SCOURED ROCKS.
THE SUN WAS COMING.
A BLUSH OF IMPULSIVE COLOR SWEPT THROUGH THE VALLEY LIKE A WAVE.
FRUIT TWITCHED UPON THE TIPS OF EVERY PLANT.
THE MORNING AIR FILLED WITH THE CHATTER OF FAMILIES COLLECTING THEIR HARVEST.
SUCH A FAMILY WAS THE FAMILY OF SUM.
THE CROP SEEMS SO GREEN TODAY, IT MUST'VE BEEN THE RAIN.
HAHAHA! DADDY! SAVE ME! DARK IS CHASING ME!
NOT NOW, SIM. PLAY WITH YOUR SISTER.

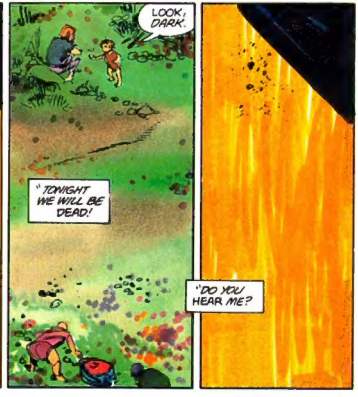

HA HA! YOU CAN'T GET ME!
YES, I CAN! I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!
AND TIME IS RIGHT BEHIND ALL OF US.
THE CROP DOES SEEM GREEN TODAY.

"THE CROP IS ALWAYS GREEN."
NOT THESE, SIM. THESE WILL MAKE YOU SICK.
MAKE ME SICK?
YES, SICK.

"THE RAIN IS ALWAYS THE SAME."
NOTHING CHANGES, BUT US!

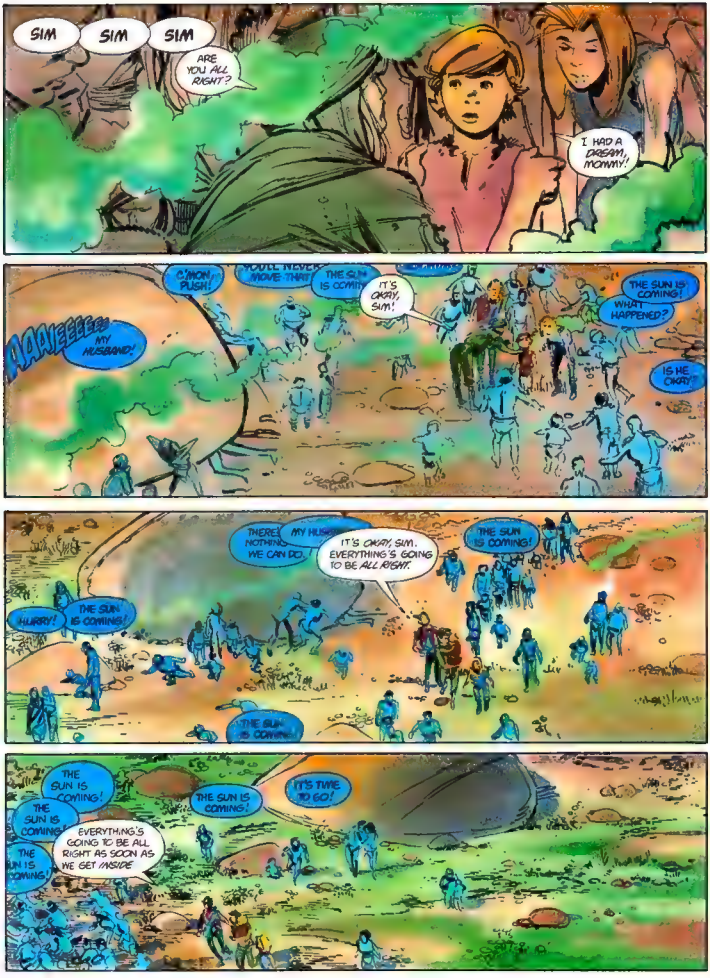
DON'T WANDER TOO FAR, SIM!
I'M WITH DARK, MOMMY!
"ALL RIGHT, SIM."


WHY HAVE YOU LEFT US HERE?
HOW CAN YOU DO THIS TO US?


LOOK, DARK.
"TONIGHT WE WILL BE DEAD!
"DO YOU HEAR ME?

"WE WILL BE NOTHING BUT MEMORIES IN THE HEADS OF OUR CHILDREN!"
GET ME SOME BERRIES, SIM. OVER THERE!
"BERRIES?"
WE MUST HURRY, MY HUSBAND! THE SUN'LL BE UP SOON. IT WILL CATCH US!
LET IT CATCH ME, THEN! IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME IF I DIE NOW OR TONIGHT!
"YOU DON'T MEAN THAT!
"WE ALL NEED YOU!"
"YOUR CHILDREN NEED YOU!"
AVALANCHE!!
WUMP
WUMP
WUMP
WUMP
WUMP

I DREAM.
I DREAM OF A PLANET WHERE MASAIS CRACKED WITH A VIOLENT, IMPOSSIBLE COLD.
WHERE MOUNTAINS BROKE OPEN IN THE GRIP OF POWERFUL ICE.
THE DAYS WERE LIKE TORCHES OF FIRE THAT SCORCHED THE FACE OF THE PLANET RAW.
I DREAM OF A LIFE SPENT IN CAVES, TRAPPED BY THE UNWELCOMING CLIMATE
I TALK, TALK WITH MY PEOPLE, THINK, THINK, AND LIE UPON MY BACK, DREAMING BUT NEVER SLEEPING
I WILL LIVE EXACTLY EIGHT DAYS
SIM?


SIM
SIM
SIM
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I HAD A DREAM, MOMMY!
C'MON! PUSH!
YOU'LL NEVER MOVE THAT
THE SUN IS COMING!
IT'S OKAY, SIM!
AAAIEEEEE!
MY HUSBAND!
THE SUN IS COMING!
WHAT HAPPENED?
IS HE OKAY?
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.
MY HUSB
IT'S OKAY, SIM. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
THE SUN IS COMING!
HURRY!
THE SUN IS COMING!
THE SUN IS COMING!
THE SUN IS COMING!
THE SUN IS COMING!
IT'S TIME TO GO!
THE SUN IS COMING!
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT AS SOON AS WE GET INSIDE
THE SUN IS COMING!

INSIDE THE CAVES!
OUT OF THE SUN!
GRISTA PAWA!
PSSSSST!
WARM AIR ROLLED INTO THE VALLEY, GENTLY AT FIRST, FILLING INTO EVERY CRAVICE, TUMBLING BACK UPON ITSELF, GROWING
SEARING HEAT FOLLOWED, BLASTING DOWN FROM THE CLIFFS
FLAME RIMMED THE HORIZON THE AIR CONVULSED DANGEROUSLY, AND WHISTLED.
TALPAT?
HE'LL NEVER MAKE IT!
THE SUN PLUNGED INTO THE VALLEY LIKE MOLTEN LAVA

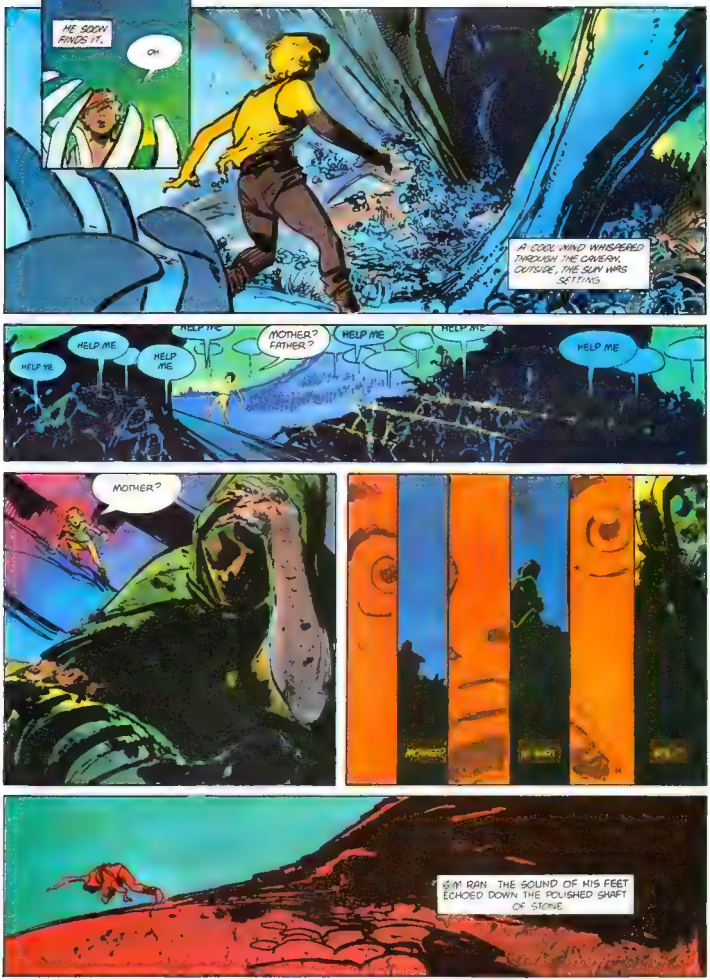
FLOWERS WERE BURNT INTO EFFIGIES
TABLSS!
SEEDS WHIRLED AND FELL IN THE SUDDEN FURIOUS BLAST OF WIND...
GRASSES SUCKED BACK UNDER ROCKS LIKE SINGED SNAKES.
SOWN FAR INTO GULLIES AND CRANNIES..
!
READY TO BLOSSOM AT SUNSET
AND DIE AGAIN.
WAAA
AAAAIIEEEE

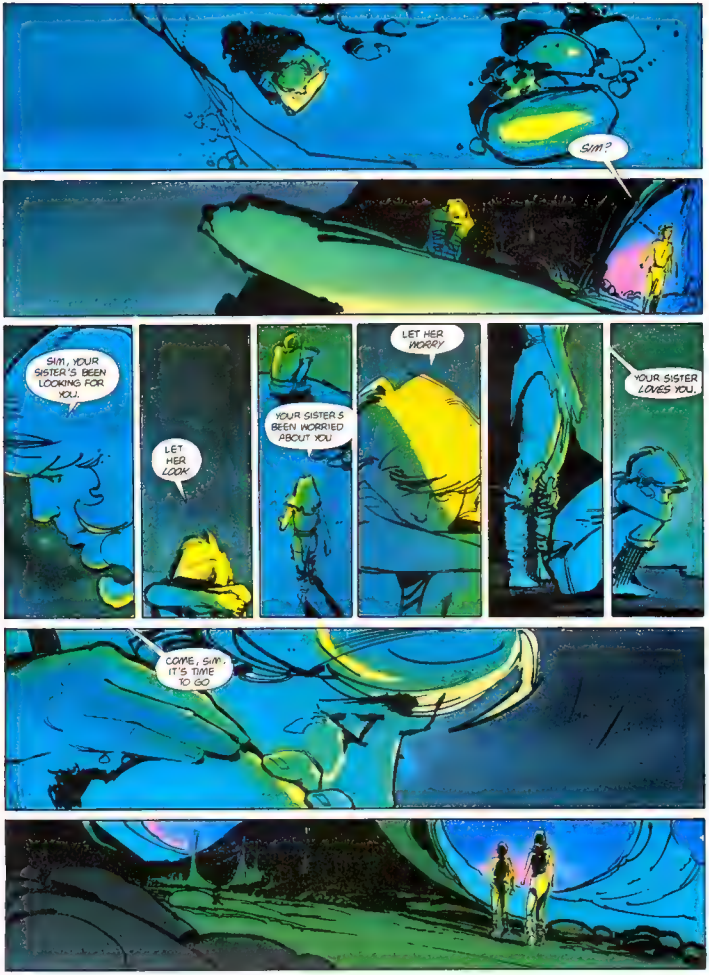
IT WAS THE TIME OF EDUCATION, THE TIME OF TALKING. EVEN THOUGH DEATH APPROACHED LIKE A BLACK METEOR, SIM NEEDED KNOWLEDGE.
HE JOINED THE PROCESSION OF NEWBORN CHILDREN
THE SCUFFLE OF THEIR WALKING ECHOED BACK AT THEM, TINNY AND HOLLOW
THE DIALOGUE CIRCLED AND FILLED THE ROOM. SWIFT AS HEARTBEATS, ONE THOUSAND, TWO THOUSAND WORDS A MINUTE
ONLY SIX MORE DAYS OF LIFE.
SIM CHAFED AT HIS IMPATIENCE AND LISTENED TO THE GROWN MEN TALK.
IN THE FAINT BACKGROUND THE WORDS WERE SPOKEN AND THEY WOVE A TAPESTRY OF KNOWLEDGE WITHIN HIM.
SIM LEARNED. HIS HEAD FILLED. HE DID NOT CLOSE HIS EYES BUT LAPSED INTO A KIND OF DREAMING.

I DREAM...
I DREAM OF GREEN MEADOWS FREE OF SNARES, ALL GRASS ROUND AND ROLLING AND RUSHING TO A DAWN WITH NO HINT OF FREEZING OR BOILING
THE GRASS REMAINED AND DID NOT BURN AWAY IN TORCHES.
A PLACE OF PEOPLE LAUGHING AND STROLLING, NEVER RUNNING
THE HEART RHYTHM WAS EVENLY LANGUID, NOT JERKING AND JAGGED.
THE DREAM PEOPLE TALKED ALWAYS OF TOMORROW AND LIVING, AND NOT OF TOMORROW AND DYING.
EVERYTHING WAS SLOW, SLOW SLOW
AH!

SUM!
I'M GLAD YOU COULD JOIN US AGAIN.
HA HA
EH...
THE ANSWER, MY LITTLE DAY-DREAMER?
HEE
HAHA
I...
HA
HA HA HA!
HAHAHA
TEETEE
HAHA
THE SCIENTISTS!
HA
THE SCIENTISTS!
THIS IS ABSURD! SCIENTISTS WHO'S US, ONTO THIS PLAN NOW HAVE WASTED TWO OF LIVES AND HOURS IT'S NO USE! DON'T YOUR TIME

THEY HAVE GONE TO THE PLACE OF DYING.
BUT WHY?
TO DIE, SIM. IT IS THEIR TIME.
NO! THEY MUST NOT! I WON'T LET THEM!
IT IS THEIR TIME!
SIM?!
NO!
NO!
NO!
SIM! STOP!
SIM DOES NOT HEAR. HE THINKS ONLY THAT HIS PARENTS ARE GONE AND HE IS ALONE.
HE CONTINUES UNHAUNTED, HOPING FOR A SIGN.


HE SOON FINDS IT.
OH
A COOL WIND WHISPERED THROUGH THE CAVERN. OUTSIDE, THE SUN WAS SETTING.
HELP ME
HELP ME
HELP ME
MOTHER? FATHER?
HELP ME
HELP ME
HELP ME
MOTHER?
I'M RAN. THE SOUND OF HIS FEET ECHOED DOWN THE POLISHED SHAFT OF STONE.


SIM?
SIM, YOUR SISTER'S BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.
LET HER LOOK
YOUR SISTER'S BEEN WORRIED ABOUT YOU
LET HER WORRY
YOUR SISTER LOVES YOU.
COME, SIM. IT'S TIME TO GO

"WE GATHER IN THE MINUTES WE HAVE TO MOURN OUR DEAD.
"WE GAVE THEM OUR TIME FREELY.
"AND WHEN THE SUN TAKES THESE BODIES FROM US..
"...WE ASK THAT THEY TRAVEL TO A BETTER PLACE."
A PLACE OF HAPPINESS.
A PLACE WHERE THAT HAPPINESS HAS TIME.
"TIME TO GROW.
"AND BLOSSOM.
"WE BELIEVE IN THAT PLACE.
"A PLACE FREE--
"-- OF FROST AND FIRE
"FOREVER.."

... SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE IT'S CALLING OUT TO ME, DARK
IT SPEAKS TO ME!
WHY DOES NO ONE KNOW WHAT IT IS?
WELL, NOT NO ONE, SIM
I'M SURE THE SCIENTISTS WOULD KNOW
THE SCIENTISTS?
YES. BUT THEY ARE HELD IN CONTEMPT BY EVERYONE IN THE CAVES
EVEN IF THEY COULD, NO ONE WOULD HELP YOU.
THEN I WILL FIND THEM BY MYSELF!
I WILL FIND THEM AND MAKE THEM TELL ME ABOUT THE METAL OBJ-
WHA--?
HEY, THAT'S MINE!
NOT ANYMORE IT ISN'T
BORRPPP
HAHAHA

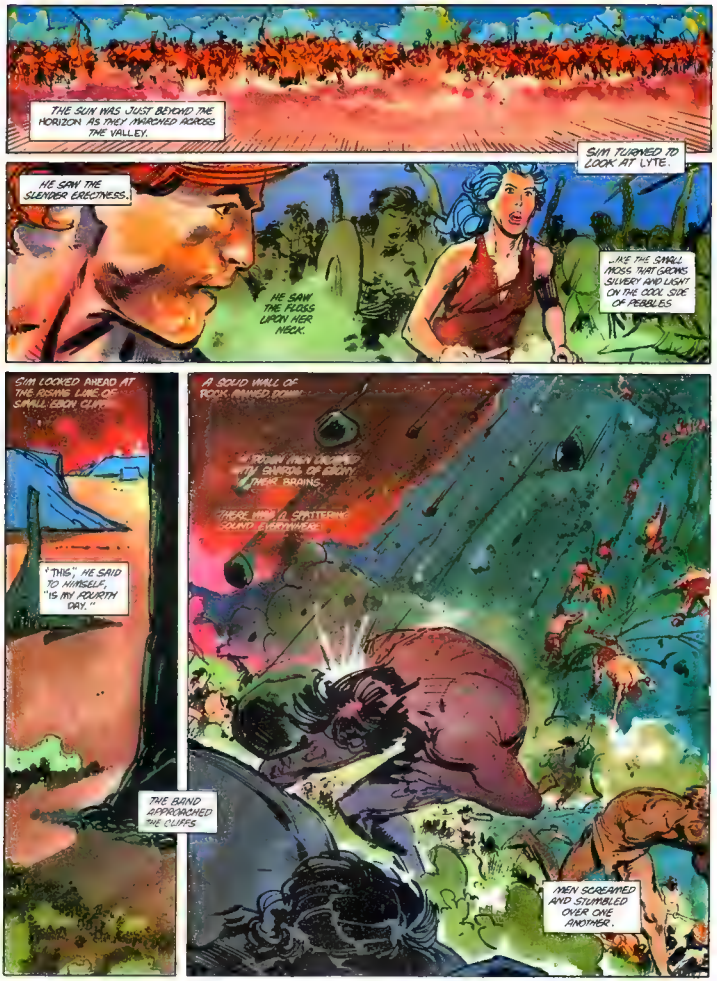
HAHAHA NO! SIM! STOP! FIGHTING IS WRONG!
HE STOLE MY FOOD!
THE SUN IS COMIN'
THE SUN IS COMING!
MY NAME IS CHION!
CHION! CHION! CHION!
THE SUN IS COMING!
AND TOMORROW I WILL BE BIG ENOUGH TO KILL YOU!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND
ENEMIES ARE MADE QUICKLY, SIM
EVERYTHING HAPPENS QUICKLY HERE..
THE SUN IS COMIN'
OH-'
HAHAHA
THE SUN IS COMING!
THE SUN IS COMING!
THE SUN IS COMING!
MY NAME IS SIM.
I AM CALLED LYTE
SHE RAN PAST, BRUSHING SIM. THEIR BODIES TOUCHED. HER EYES, WHITE AS SILVER COINS, SHONE AT HIM. ONLY A GLANCE. BUT IT HELD THE TWO OF THEM IN MID-MOTION.
"SIM," SHE REPEATED "I'LL REMEMBER."

SIM RAN THROUGH THE TUNNELS, SEEKING. SOMETIMES HE HALF-IMAGINED WHERE THE SCIENTISTS WERE.
WHEN HE ASKED THE DIRECTIONS TO THE SCIENTISTS' CAVE, A FLOOD OF ANGRY THOUGHT WASHED OVER HIM IN CONFUSION AND RESENTMENT.
AFTER ALL, IT WAS THE SCIENTISTS' FAULT THAT THEY HAD BEEN STRANDED ON THIS TERRIBLE WORLD!
SIM BLUNDERED INTO A DOZEN DEAD ENDS, UNTIL...
HE FOUND WHAT HE LOOKED FOR
THE MEN TURNED AS SIM ENTERED
HA-RUMPH!
WHAT IS THIS?
IT'S A TROUBLEMONGER!
CHASE HIM AWAY!
WHAT DO YOU WANT, BOY?
I WANT TO LIVE.
ARE YOU SICK?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
GO AWAY!
YOU'LL MISS ALL OF LIFE
TOMORROW YOU'LL BE ALMOST FULLY GROWN!
THAT IS ENOUGH!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SCIENTIST?
I ONLY KNOW ONE THING.
I WANT TO LIVE!

LYTE, LYTE!
THE SCIENTISTS SAID I COULD STAY AND LEARN FROM THEM! THEY SAID--
WHAT'S WRONG?
LYTE, WHAT'S THE MATTER?
NOTHING.
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE HAPPY FOR ME.
WHAT ABOUT ME, SIM? DID YOU THINK HOW I WOULD FEEL?
YOU ALWAYS ONLY THINK OF YOURSELF!
AT LEAST I'M THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING! AT LEAST I'M DOING SOMETHING MORE THAN SITTING AROUND MAKING TRINKETS AND ORNAMENTS!
SIM! I MADE THIS ORNAMENT--
CHUNK
--FOR YOU!

...AFTER THE SEEDS CRASHED, THE SURVIVORS HID AND DUG INTO THE CLIFFS. IT IS ONLY THE MANY LAYERS OF ROCK WHICH PROTECT US FROM THE SUN AND COLD.
WHY CAN'T WE GO TO THAT SHIP ON THE MOUNTAIN, DIENC?
TOO FAR, SIM WE HAVEN'T PROTECTION TO RUN SUCH A DISTANCE.
HAVE YOU TRIED TO MAKE PROTECTION?
OF COURSE! SALVES AND CANTMENTS, SUITS OF STONE AND BIRD WING. NOTHING WORKED. IN TEN THOUSAND MORE LIFETIMES, PERHAPS...
IN THE MEANWHILE, WE STUDY AND LEARN FROM THESE REMNANTS.
MECHANICAL THINGS. LIKE THIS, FOR EXAMPLE.
SIM!
OWW!
THEY'RE COMING FOR YOU!
LYTE!
WHACK!
THE WARMONGERS ARE COMING TO TAKE YOU TO WAR!
WAR? MY PLACE IS HERE!
I'm A SCIENTIST NOW.
I'M NOT GOING TO WAR!
THEY SAY YOU CAN LIVE THREE EXTRA DAYS IF YOU WIN!
THREE DAYS! IS THAT TRUE, DIENC?
I'VE HEARD IT MIGHT BE TRUE
OF COURSE IT'S TRUE, OLD MAN!

CHION!
THERE'S A MINERAL IN THE CAVES THAT PROTECTS YOU! WIN THE WAR AND YOU WIN THE CAVES!
THINK OF IT, SIM! THREE EXTRA DAYS! IF YOU'RE MAN ENOUGH TO FIGHT FOR THEM
THIS MAN BELONGS HERE! HE IS A SCIENTIST!
NO! LEAVE! GET OUT!
GO DIE, OLD MAN! BY SUNSET YOU'LL BE CHARRED BONE!
DIENC, IF I WIN, I'LL HAVE THREE MORE DAYS! I'LL BE HALF A MILE CLOSER TO THE SHIP!
IF YOU WIN, IF YOU WIN!
THE WARMONGERS HAVE NEVER WON! THEY HAVE ALWAYS LOST!
YOU'RE MY PUPIL, SIM.
THIS IS MY CHANCE, DIENC. I MUST GO.
YES, YES, I KNOW.
GOOD-BYE, SIM.
GOOD-BYE ?
YES, SIM YOUR FRIEND IS RIGHT. SOON I WILL BE CHARRED BONE.
I'LL BE BACK, DIENC. I PROMISE.


THE SUN WAS JUST BEYOND THE HORIZON AS THEY MARCHED ACROSS THE VALLEY.
SIM TURNED TO LOOK AT LYTE.
HE SAW THE SLENDER ERECTNESS..
HE SAW THE FLOSS UPON HER NECK.
..LIKE THE SMALL MOSS THAT GROWS SILVERY AND LIGHT ON THE COOL SIDE OF PEBBLES.
SIM LOOKED AHEAD AT THE ROSINE LINE OF SMALL EBON CLIFFS.
"THIS," HE SAID TO HIMSELF, "IS MY FOURTH DAY."
THE BAND APPROACHED THE CLIFFS.
A SOLID WALL OF ROCK RANGED DOWN.
"ROUND MEN UNCOILED WITH SWORDS OF EBON, THEIR BRAINS.
"THERE WAS A SPATTERING SOUND EVERYWHERE.
MEN SCREAMED AND STUMBLED OVER ONE ANOTHER.

THE MUSCLES IN SIM'S CHEEKS PULLED TIGHT AND HE BEGAN TO WONDER WHY HE HAD EVER COME.
SIM!
HE TWISTED AND SAW LYTE'S HAND LOOSE AT THE WRIST.
SHE CLAMPED IT UNDER HER ARMPIT TO SOOTHE THE PAIN.
THE ANGER ROSE IN SIM AND EXPLODED.
LYTE!
IN HIS FURY HE RACED FORWARD, THROWING HIS MISSILES WITH DEADLY ACCURACY.
HE MUST HAVE BEEN SCREAMING, FOR HIS LUNGS WERE BURSTING OPEN AND HIS THROAT WAS RAW.
THE STONE THAT CLUBBED HIS HEAD SENT HIM SPINNING AND PLUNGING BACK.

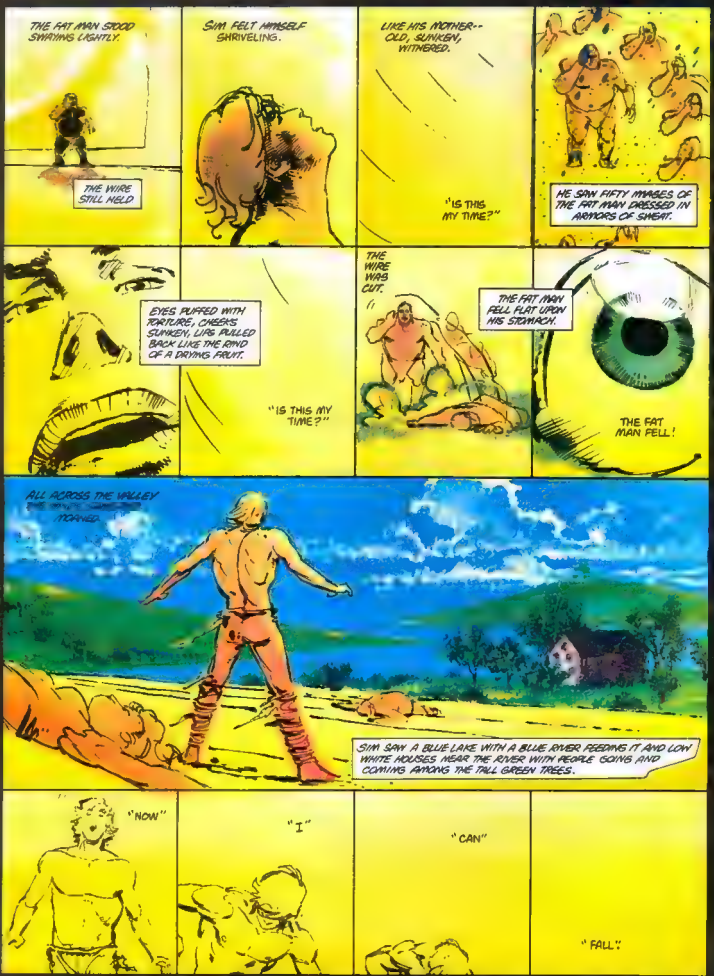
HE ATE SAND. HE COULD NOT GET UP.
HE LAY AND KNEW THAT THIS WAS HIS LAST DAY, HIS LAST TIME
DIMLY HE FELT LYTE OVER HIM.
SHE TRIED TO DRAG HIM OUT OF RANGE, BUT HE LAY GASPING AND TELLING HER TO LEAVE HIM.
SIM, GET UP! THE SUN IS COMING!
"CAN YOU WALK?"
YES, I THINK SO
"WALK, THEN."
WE'LL WALK SLOWLY AT FIRST
"WE'LL MAKE IT, I KNOW WE WILL."

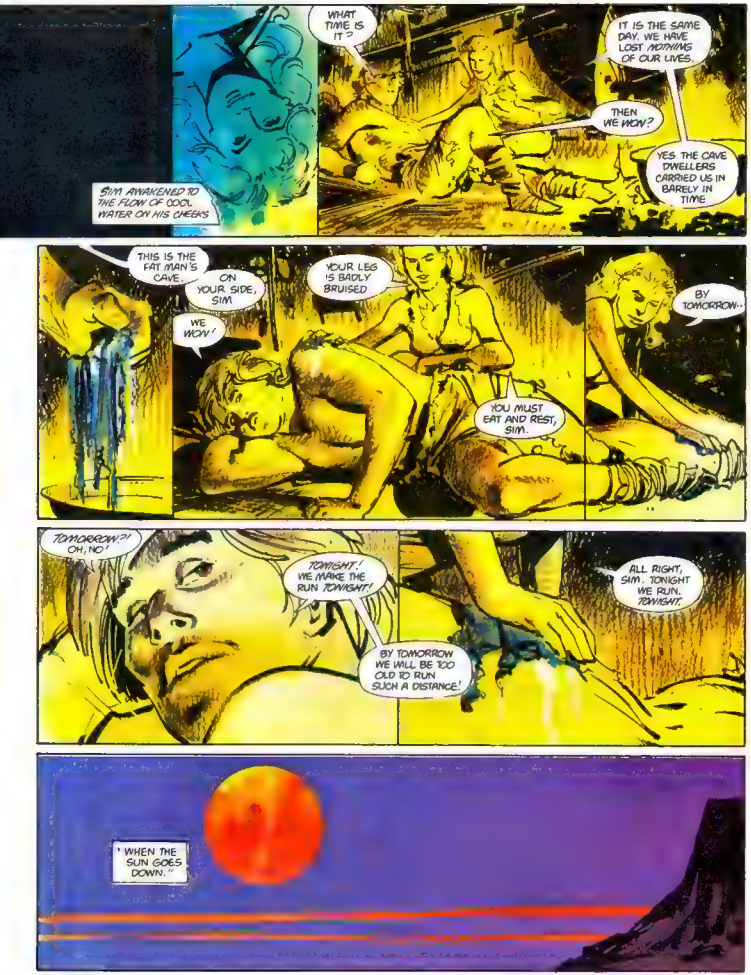
HE'LL NEVER MAKE IT NOW!
WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE HIM HERE
COME BACK WITH ME, LYTE. I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU.
LYTE SPRANG UPON CHION HER FINGERS STROKED GREAT BLOODY FURROWS DOWN HIS FACE AND NECK
CAN YOU WALK?
NO, I DON'T THINK SO.
NEVERTHELESS, WE MUST WALK
NO! WE'LL STAY HERE
WE CAME TO SEEK A HOME HERE. IF WE WALK, WE WILL DIE. I WOULD RATHER DIE HERE
THEN I WILL STAY WITH YOU. HOW MUCH TIME HAVE WE?
"A FEW MINUTES."

SEND ME DOWN ONE MAN TO DO BATTLE!
SIM, WHAT--?
HEAR ME!
SEND DOWN A BRAVE MAN WHO WILL FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO HIS CAVE!
A WAVE OF HEAT PASSED OVER THE LAND, RECEDED
IS THERE NO ONE--?
QUIET, LITTLE BOY. I WILL FIGHT YOU!
I WILL FIGHT YOU AND TURN YOU INTO THE DUST YOU ARE!
COME AND KILL ME, FAT MAN!

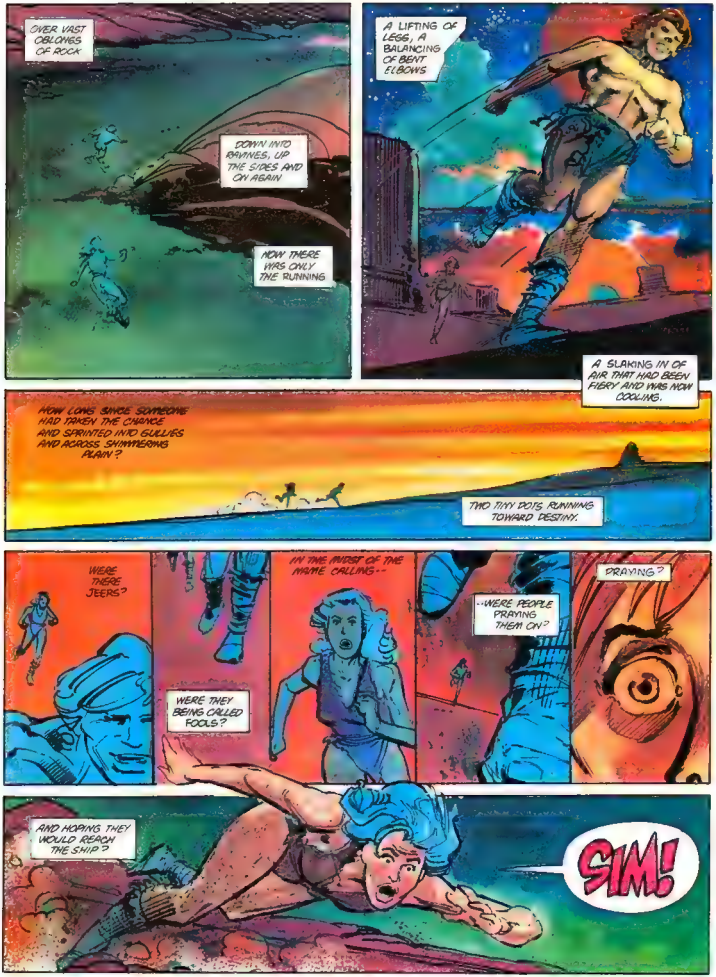
WE WILL PLAY BY THE RULES.
WE FIGHT ONLY WITH STONES!
"THE SUN OR THE STONES WILL DO EITHER OF US IN!"
AS IF AT A CUE, THE SUN ROSE
NOW!
CHUNK!
CHUNK!
CHUNK!
NOT AS EASY AS YOU THOUGHT, EH?, LITTLE BOY?
MUHAHAHA
SIM LET LOOSE HIS HANDFUL OF STONES.

ONE OF THEM STRUCK THE FAT MAN UNDER THE LEFT EYEBALL.
AIEEEEE
SIM CHOKED OUT A BITTER LAUGH
THE BLACK ROCKS OF THE CLIFF WERE PALING AS THE SUN BEGAN TO FLOOD THE WORLD.
THE TEST
THE TEST OF THE SUN
THE SUN WAS NOW FULLY OVER THE HORIZON.
THE SAND BEGAN TO ROIL AND BUBBLE
THE FAT MAN HUNG ON AS IF BY A WIRE.
"FALL, DAMN YOU! FALL SO THAT I CAN TAKE YOUR PLACE."
A WHIRRING, BUZZING, FRYING SOUND FILLED THE LAND.
SIM'S KNEE MADE A WRENCHING SOUND ON THE HARD EARTH.
HE'S DOWN!
NO NO NO

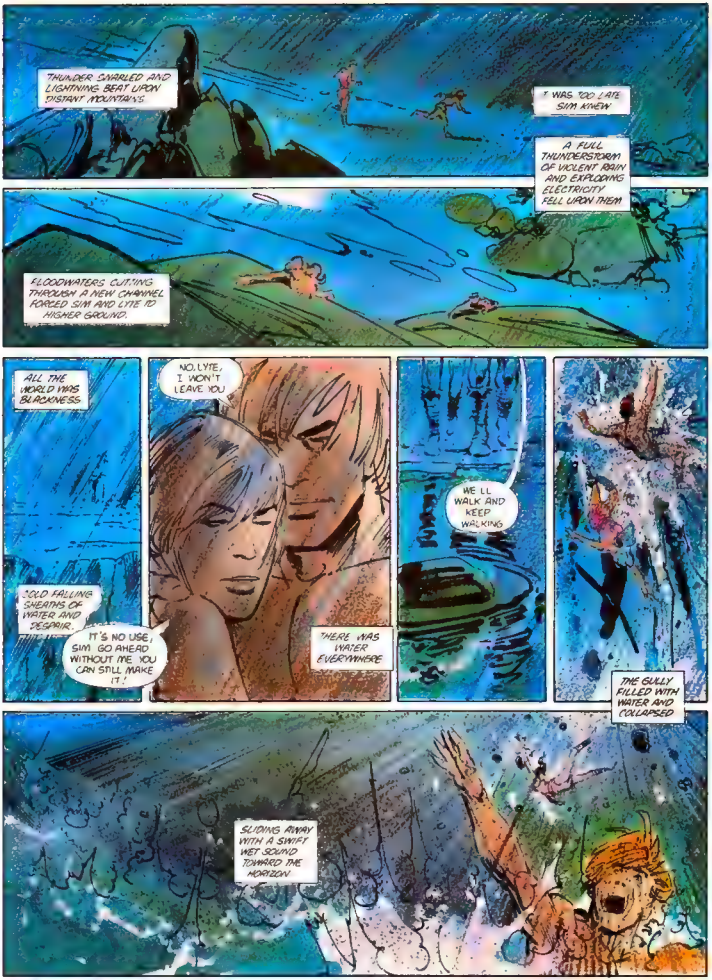

THE FAT MAN STOOD SWAYING LIGHTLY.
THE WIRE STILL HELD
SIM FELT HIMSELF SHRIVELING.
LIKE HIS MOTHER-- OLD, SUNKEN, WITHERED.
"IS THIS MY TIME?"
HE SAW FIFTY IMAGES OF THE FAT MAN DRESSED IN ARMORS OF SWEAT.
EYES PUFFED WITH RAPTURE, CHEEKS SUNKEN, LIPS PULLED BACK LIKE THE RIND OF A DRYING FRUIT.
"IS THIS MY TIME?"
THE WIRE WAS CUT.
THE FAT MAN FELL FLAT UPON HIS STOMACH.
THE FAT MAN FELL!
ALL ACROSS THE VALLEY
MOANED.
SIM SAW A BLUE LAKE WITH A BLUE RIVER FEEDING IT AND LOW WHITE HOUSES NEAR THE RIVER WITH PEOPLE GOING AND COMING AMONG THE TALL GREEN TREES.
"NOW"
"I"
"CAN"
"FALL."

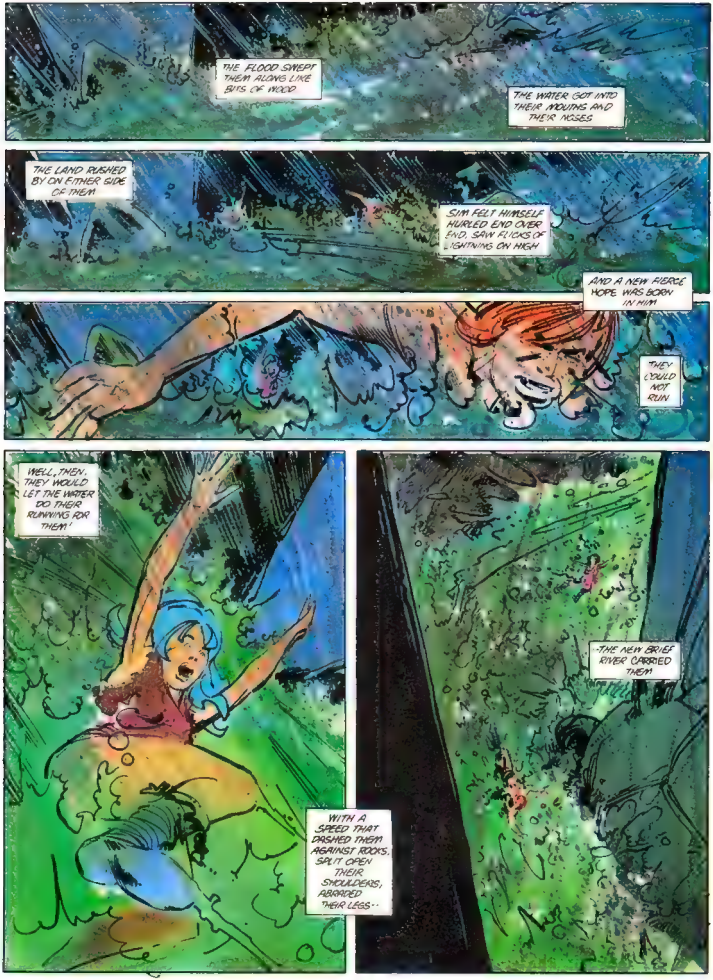

SIM AWAKENED TO THE FLOW OF COOL WATER ON HIS CHEEKS
WHAT TIME IS IT?
IT IS THE SAME DAY. WE HAVE LOST MONTHS OF OUR LIVES.
THEN WE WON?
YES. THE CAVE DWELLERS CARRIED US IN BARELY IN TIME
THIS IS THE FAT MAN'S CAVE.
ON YOUR SIDE, SIM.
WE WON!
YOUR LEG IS BADLY BRUISED
BY TOMORROW..
YOU MUST EAT AND REST, SIM.
TOMORROW?! OH, NO!
TONIGHT! WE MAKE THE RUN TONIGHT!
BY TOMORROW WE WILL BE TOO OLD TO RUN SUCH A DISTANCE!
ALL RIGHT, SIM. TONIGHT WE RUN. TONIGHT.
"WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN."

SUN AND LIFE BURST FROM THE BLACKNESS OF THE DARK
IT WAS THE TIME OF LEAPING AND RUNNING
THEY RAN
BETWEEN THE HOT DEATH AND THE COLD
TOGETHER, THEY RAN AWAY FROM THE CLIFFS
OUT TOWARD THE DISTANT BECKONING SHIP.
WERE THERE CHILDREN STOPPING IN THEIR PLAYING TO SEE THE TWO PEOPLE RACING AGAINST TIME?
WERE THERE LOVERS BACK THERE?
GAZING AT THE TWO TINY DOTS?
THE SOUND OF THEIR FEET WAS A HARD, INSISTENT CLATTER.


OVER VAST OBLONGS OF ROCK
DOWN INTO RAVINES, UP THE SIDES AND ON AGAIN
NOW THERE WAS ONLY THE RUNNING
A LIFTING OF LEGS, A BALANCING OF BENT ELBOWS
A SLAKING IN OF AIR THAT HAD BEEN FIERY AND WAS NOW COOLING.
HOW LONG SINCE SOMEONE HAD TAKEN THE CHANCE AND SPRINTED INTO GULLIES AND ACROSS SHIMMERING PLAIN?
TWO TINY DOTS RUNNING TOWARD DESTINY.
WERE THERE JEERS?
WERE THEY BEING CALLED FOOLS?
IN THE MIDST OF THE MAYHEM CALLING--
--WERE PEOPLE PRAYING THEM ON?
PRAYING?
AND HOPING THEY WOULD REACH THE SHIP?
SIM!

I'M ALL RIGHT, SIM.
THIS IS THE HALFWAY MARK, LYTE
IF WE WANT TO GO BACK, WE STILL HAVE TIME!
GO BACK?
NO, SIM!
WE'RE GOT TO GO AHEAD! WE CAN NEVER GO BACK!
TWO TINY DOTS THAT WERE A MAN AND A WOMAN RUNNING TOWARD DESTINY


THUNDER SNARLED AND LIGHTNING BEAT UPON DISTANT MOUNTAINS.
IT WAS TOO LATE SIM KNEW.
A FULL THUNDERSTORM OF VIOLENT RAIN AND EXPLODING ELECTRICITY FELL UPON THEM
FLOODWATERS CUTTING THROUGH A NEW CHANNEL FORCED SIM AND LYTE TO HIGHER GROUND.
ALL THE WORLD WAS BLACKNESS.
COLD FALLING SHEATHS OF WATER AND DESPAIR.
NO, LYTE, I WON'T LEAVE YOU
IT'S NO USE, SIM! GO AHEAD WITHOUT ME. YOU CAN STILL MAKE IT!
THERE WAS WATER EVERYWHERE
WE'LL WALK AND KEEP WALKING
THE GULLY FILLED WITH WATER AND COLLAPSED
SLIDING AWAY WITH A SWIFT WET SOUND TOWARD THE HORIZON


THE FLOOD SWEPT THEM ALONG LIKE BITS OF WOOD
THE WATER GOT INTO THEIR MOUTHS AND THEIR NOSES
THE LAND RUSHED BY ON EITHER SIDE OF THEM
SIM FELT HIMSELF HURLED END OVER END, SAW FLICKS OF LIGHTNING ON MESH
AND A NEW FIERCE HOPE WAS BORN IN HIM
THEY COULD NOT RUN
"WELL, THEN, THEY WOULD LET THE WATER DO THEIR RUNNING FOR THEM!"
WITH A SPEED THAT DASHED THEM AGAINST ROCKS, SPLIT OPEN THEIR SHOULDERS, ABRADED THEIR LEGS...
THE NEW BRIEF RIVER CARRIED THEM

LYTE
GASP
TRY TO GET TO THE
GASP
OTHER SIDE!
THE MOUNTAIN WHERE THE SHIP LAY WAS JUST AHEAD.
THEY COULD NOT PASS IT BY!
SIM LEAPT UP AT THE OVERHANGING ROCK.

SIM!
DON'T LET GO!
DON'T LET GO!
SIM DREW HIMSELF HAND OVER HAND UPWARD
THEN CAME THE KILLING COLD
IT SLID ALONG THEIR LIMBS...
... AND SLOWED THEM.

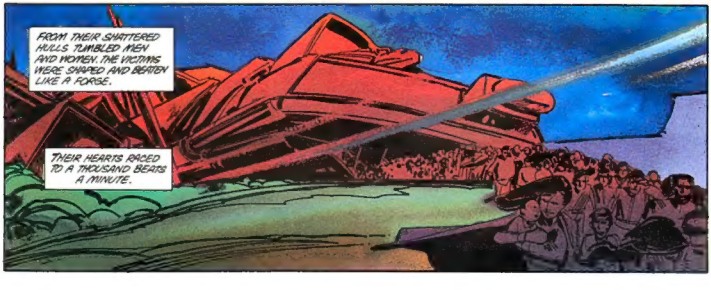
THE SHIP LAY ON ITS SIDE LIKE A GIANT SLEEPING BIRD
OPEN UP!
OPEN UP!
OPEN UP!!
CLICK!

STOP WASTING YOUR TIME (CHOMP) WAITING FOR YOUR (CHOMP) STUPID BROTHER!
I SAW HIM WOUNDED (CHOMP). I SAW HIM FALL (CHOMP). THE SUN WAS SO HOT (CHOMP)
HIS STUPID ASHES ARE (CHOMP) BLOWING AROUND THE VALLEY SOMEWHERE (CHOMP)
STOP WASTING YOUR TIME WAITING FOR YOUR STUPID BROTHER!
COME AND EAT!
MY BROTHER IS NOT STUPID, CHION.
YOUR BROTHER, MY DEAR WIFE (CHOMP), IS DEAD!
AAAA

I DREAM OF THE TOUCH OF COOL SMOOTH
THE SHIP SPEAKS TO ME
IN THE FAR-OFF I HEAR A SOUND THEN AGAIN, THEN AGAIN THUD, PAUSE, THUD, PAUSE MY HEART
FROM SOMEWHERE A MACHINE CLANKED. A CONTROL SLIDE OF AIR FILLED THE ROOM
SLOW, SLOW
I BELIEVE I'VE BEEN HERE AND THEN TO SPAN
HAVE BEEN THERE KNOCKS ABOVE ME
HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN LYING HERE

I DREAM OF THE TOUCH OF COOL SMOOTH METAL SLOWING ME DOWN.
THE SHIP SPEAKS TO ME.

FROM A DISTANT GREEN WORLD CAME FIERY WARSHIPS THAT SPRUNG FROM HER LIKE WILD BEASTS.
THE METAL SEEDS WERE BLOWN ACROSS SPACE UNTIL THEY CRASHED ON THIS BLEAK PLANET.


FROM THEIR SHATTERED HULLS TUMBLED MEN AND WOMEN. THE VICTIMS WERE SHAPED AND BEATEN LIKE A FORGE.
THEIR HEARTS RACED TO A THOUSAND BEATS A MINUTE.

THE SOUND OF RAIN EMBRACES ME LIKE AN OLD FRIEND.
THE DAY PASSES. I AM LYING HERE. MY LIFE SLIPS AWAY.
FROM SOMEWHERE A MACHINE CLICKED. WARM AIR SWEEPS INTO THE ROOM.
IN THE EARLY MORNING THE CAVE PEOPLE SAW THE WEIRD MYSTICAL APPARITION RUNNING. THERE WAS MUTTERING AND MOANING AND MANY SIGNS OF AWE.
I HAVE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAIN. I COME FROM THE SHIP.
FROM SOMEWHERE A MACHINE CLICKS.
A PERFECT DAWN RISES ABOVE ME.
HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN LYING HERE?

THE DAY PASSES.
I AM LYING HERE.
FROM SOMEWHERE A MACHINE CLICKED.
A PERFECT DAWN RISES ABOVE ME.
I SAID, WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S TIME, SHE SAID.
I HAVE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAIN.
I CAME FROM THE SHIP.
A PERFECT DAWN RISES ABOVE ME.
I SAID, WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S TIME, SHE SAID.
I SAID, WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S TIME, SHE SAID.
I SAID, WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S TIME, SHE SAID.
TIME, SHE SAID.
TIME.